

which chanced to come to my notice lately through the agency of a friend.

A bookshop, in this freedom-loving land of ours, ventured a short time ago to display in its window a copy of a certain book, written by a disabled ex-service man, and "designed," as is definitely stated in its preface, "especially for the general reader." At first all went peacefully. Soon, however, reproachful murmurings, some of them emanating from an ecclesiastical dignitary, were conveyed to those in charge of the establishment. And it was not until the object of distress had been removed from the window that a state of serenity was once more attained.

The book concerned, I must add, was my *Birth Control and Its Opponents*, with foreword by Lord Horder. Its chief aim is to throw a little light on the questions of slumdom and war.\*

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## Assessment of Feeble-mindedness in Different Countries†

To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—I am grateful for the opportunity offered to give references to papers indicating the assessment of feeble-mindedness in Europe. For England the major source of information is the Wood Report. Previously to this there is the assessment of intelligence quotient for the whole London school population published in Professor Cyril Burt's book on mental testing and given again in his lecture to the Henderson Trust, reprints of which were for some time available at the *Eugenics Society*. Reference for England may also be made to the examination of the rural school population of Northumberland by Thomson and Duff, and the comparable study of the Isle of Wight by MacDonald (who worked with them for a time).

For the European material we have to thank Dr. C. P. Blacker, who introduced these papers to England in the weighty memorandum he prepared on behalf of the *Society* for the Brock Committee. They are:

Alfons Lokay: *Zeitschrift fuer die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie*. Vol. CXXII, 1929, p. 106.

\* *Birth Control and Its Opponents* is reviewed on page 69.

† Mrs. Hodson recently sent to all Fellows and Members of the *Society* a circular letter which contained the following statement: "The best available data show that Great Britain has approximately four times as much feeble-mindedness as the Northern Part of Europe and the kindred nations of Central Europe." In response to a suggestion by the General Purposes Committee of the *Society*, at a meeting held on March 26th, Mrs. Hodson has kindly contributed to the *Review* this exposition of the grounds upon which her opinion is based.

Carl Brugger: *Zeitschrift fuer die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie*. Vol. CXXX, 1930, p. 77.

Carl Brugger: *Zeitschrift fuer die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie*. Vol. CXXXIII, p. 352.

Werner Pleger: *Zeitschrift fuer die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie*. Vol. CXXXV, 1931.

*Papers describing the Assessment of Averages:*

Carl Brugger: *Zeitschrift fuer die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie*. Vol. CXVIII, p. 479.

Luxenburger: *Zeitschrift fuer die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie*. Vol. CXII, pp. 451, 3, 5.

If a traveller, describing a population, speaks of males with stature of 5 ft. 6 in. as very tall, the implication is that the average of the population is of distinctly lower stature than our own. Conversely, when we find abroad an intelligence quotient little below the average for our own population falling into the category of the feeble-minded we may anticipate that the numbers having that quotient will be smaller than in this country where the upper limit for that group is intelligent quotient 75.

Papers are cited in the report of the Brock Committee, pages 131-2. The résumés do not, however, give the assessments contained of the number of feeble-minded found in cross sections of the population for the areas studied. The short abstracts do, however, call attention to the striking fact, which is true for Northern Europe as a whole, that the condition of oligophrenia embraces intelligence quotients up to 90 and 95. The quotients are not given in the résumé, but the few lines are already indicative to those conversant with different types.

The percentages assessed as oligophrenic, and under the present German sterilization law eligible for sterilization, run from 2.2 to 3 per cent. It is true that none of these investigations stand as Government surveys in the sense of the Wood report; nor were these different areas surveyed by the same investigator, with the exception of Bale (to which I have no published reference) and the studies in Thuringia and the Allgau, both of which were made by Brugger. All the investigators, however, followed the same lines, namely those of the Munich school. Their assessments have not been questioned by any other workers abroad that I have encountered. Variations between area and area appear normal to the psychiatrists who for years have been studying this problem in Northern and Central Europe.

The first fact which invited investigation was the grading of that part of the population which workers in England have defined as "mentally sub-normal" and "the social problem group" as feeble-minded. It seemed hardly likely that a proportion of the population running as high as 10 per cent. would be so classed. Then the fact emerged that this intelligence level in four distinct areas appeared as above; namely 2.16 to 3 per cent.

The first inference is that the whole system of grading must be on a different standard to that obtaining here. Many people will dispose of these disturbing figures with that explanation. They will have some justification. No two investigators will assess the same individual alike on the marginal lines between one grade and another. Abroad, as at home, each experienced examiner tends to use his own individual type of test. Much inquiry has been needed to elicit from the best-known authorities what they regarded as their ultimate standard. Everywhere tests are themselves graded by the Binet-Simon standard. Twice I have had lengthy expositions from Dr. Brugger on his methods. Dr. Wildenskov has twice explained the similarity between his work and that of the German investigators; and the Europeans as a whole accept each other's gradings without serious question. Neither do they criticize the gradings in our institutions when they have had the opportunity of studying them here.

I have felt compelled to draw attention to the tragic comparison between the numbers of the lower grades of intelligence in our own country and the Anglo-Saxon countries on the Continent with which we are competing industrially. Everywhere the figures are approximate and approximate only, but they stand roughly at one abroad to four at home. Here, many are inclined to question putting the mentally sub-normal (that is, up to intelligence quota of 95) as high as 10 per cent. Sir George Newman made this calculation on the school attainments of "leavers." For the layman the question can best be settled by seeing the proportional distribution in intelligence on the graph given by Cyril Burt for London, which is generally admitted to rank slightly higher than the country as a whole.

An explanation was attempted at some length in a paper on contra-selection given at the Eugenics Congress in New York, 1932, of which I have reprints for any who would like them (in the report "A Decade of Progress in Eugenics," see pages 372, 377). Those, however, who appreciate the evidence we have (a) for the transmission of intelligence, (b) for the frequent occurrence of feeble-mindedness in the offspring of parents round about the level of I.Q. 90-95, will find the marriage regulations abroad sufficient explanation. A reputation of feeble-mindedness usually prevents a marriage licence being obtained by the male; this explains the higher percentage of feeble-minded mothers than fathers in some of the papers quoted, despite the fact that assessments show more male than female feeble-mindedness. Further, until the middle of last century, marriage licences were only granted abroad (in the Anglo-Saxon countries) where the applicant could show that his earnings were sufficient to support a wife and family and that they were likely to be permanent. I should be grateful to any sociologist who could give further data on this point, which I read in an article without noting the title. Allusions in some

of the papers cited in the Brock Report show that economic stability still influences consideration of eligibility for marriage licences.

What we now chiefly want, I submit, is assessments of the grade of intelligence obtaining in the numerically largest portion of these populations. Burt's study gives this as I.Q. 100 for England. Unfortunately, I have not yet obtained any sample studies for this abroad, and I am convinced that as yet nothing exists there nearly as complete as the London study.

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*To the Editor, Eugenics Review*

SIR,—I have read Mrs. Hodson's letter and am surprised to find that, so far as the European material is concerned, her statement is based upon the evidence which I collected on behalf of the *Society* for submission to the Brock Committee.

I would like emphatically to state that I do not consider that the figures collected in the *Society's* evidence and contained in the papers mentioned by Mrs. Hodson bear the interpretation which she has placed upon them. I feel confident, moreover, that Mrs. Hodson would have some difficulty in finding a single responsible psychiatrist in this country who would support her interpretation. As far as I am able to understand Mrs. Hodson's letter, she contends that, whereas in this country some 10 per cent. of the population has been estimated as being mentally retarded, in Germany only some 2 to 3 per cent. of the population is eligible for sterilization on the grounds of being oligophrenic. Oligophrenia as evaluated in Germany, she further seems to argue, is equivalent to mental retardation as judged in this country. From this she deduces the statement contained in her circular letter that, according to the best data available, there exists approximately four times as much feeble-mindedness in Great Britain as in the northern part of Europe.

If I have correctly interpreted Mrs. Hodson's argument, I would say that this deduction seems to me to be entirely fallacious on the following grounds:

1. There is no evidence that the authorities who have drawn up the German Sterilization Law would regard as oligophrenic all persons with an I.Q. of 95 and under.
2. There is no evidence that in Germany persons of an I.Q. up to 95 constitute 2 to 3 per cent. of the population.
3. There is no evidence for supposing that persons with an I.Q. of 95 or under, regarded as an aggregate, correspond in any way with "the Social Problem Group" as described by the Wood Committee.
4. Even if full evidence on points 1, 2 and 3 were available, this would have nothing to do with